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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 000651

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SUBJECT: DE GUCHT AND KARIMOV - AN OSCE MANDATE CHANGE AND
FOREIGN MEDDLING IN ANDIJON

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY AMB. JON R. PURNELL FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) Summary: OSCE Ambassador Jenca briefed OSCE ambassadors on Belgian FM and OSCE Chairman in Office (CiO) Karel De Gucht,s visit. According to Jenca, President Karimov told De Gucht a decision has not yet been made on the OSCE,s mandate, but he would like the mission to transform into a &Project Coordinator,s Office.8 Karimov said all information regarding Andijon was already public and that similar events will not occur in the future without outside influence. Karimov also made an oft-repeated claim of a coordinated information campaign to discredit Uzbekistan. End summary.

¶2. (C) Belgian FM De Gucht visited Tashkent on March 31-April 1 for meetings with the GOU, (FM Ganiev and President Karimov) and local NGOs. Briefing OSCE ambassadors April 3, OSCE Tashkent Center Ambassador Jenca said that in conversations with Karimov and Ganiev, FM De Gucht conveyed that the OSCE is ready to cooperate with the GOU in a balanced way in all three OSCE dimensions. De Gucht recommended that the Economic and Environmental Activities Coordinator Bernard Snoy visit Tashkent to develop related projects and initiatives. Karimov stressed to De Gucht that cooperation with the OSCE is only possible when all participating states are treated as equal partners. He said that the OSCE needs to work on building consensus among all its members, including regarding statements by senior OSCE officials. Additionally, Karimov said stability in Central Asia depends on regional cooperation, therefore the OSCE should develop projects to promote larger-scale regional cooperation, along the lines of the Central Asia plus Japan forum.

¶3. (C) Karimov told De Gucht the GOU is still discussing the OSCE Tashkent Center,s mandate, and the decision will &depend on next steps and cooperation in the near future.8 Implicit in this response was that the decision will be made before the current mandate runs out in June. The Swiss Ambassador asked Jenca if Karimov might be referring to the upcoming report on Andijon trial monitoring by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights when he mentioned &the next steps.8 Jenca said the report was not mentioned at the meeting and that he did not want to speculate on what Karimov might have meant by &next steps.8 Jenca said Karimov specifically noted, however, that with the new mandate he would like the Center to become more like an OSCE &Project Coordinator,s Office.8

¶4. (C) De Gucht said that access to information on the May 2005 events in Andijon was crucial to understand what happened and to prevent similar events in the future. Karimov said the GOU provided all information on the events during open trials monitored by foreign diplomats. Karimov then relayed his version of the events, adding that he believes Uzbekistan is the object of an ongoing information campaign to discredit the country. He also said that what happened in Andijon in May was a terrorist act and a continuation of what began in Kyrgyzstan in late March 2005. Karimov said that without outside influence, such events will not occur again in the future.

¶5. (C) When De Gucht raised concerns over the status of civil society and imprisoned human rights activists, Karimov said the democratization process is on track. He added that all NGOs should obey the law, giving the impression that only those operating illegally are subject to pressure. De Gucht promised to forward Karimov a list with specific details on jailed activists.

¶6. (C) De Gucht also met briefly with local NGOs. A MFA representative also participated. Talib Yakubov, long-standing Chairman of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, spoke about human rights abuses and presented a statement. (Note: According to another OSCE contact, he was asked not to read it due to time constraints. Yakubov was agitated and even though the OSCE translated the statement and sent it to the appropriate ministries, he wrote a scathing op-ed piece in a local newspaper the following day (septel). End note.)

¶7. (C) Comment: De Gucht,s visit to Uzbekistan was the last

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leg of his Central Asian tour. In fact, from our understanding, the stopover was only finalized at the last minute, as it was unclear if De Gucht would receive an audience with Karimov. The visit yielded no tangible results, and the Uzbeks made it clear they were trying to get as much leverage as possible out of the mandate renewal for the Tashkent office. The assembled ambassadors at the debrief found little from which to take encouragement. As the German said on the way out, &There doesn,t seem to be much point to having senior OSCE officials come here.8
PURNELL